

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 SSC-01 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /060 W

-----081726Z 126957 /40

R 081636Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1592

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, FR

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON JACQUES LEGENDRE, STATE
SECRETARY FOR LABOR

1. BORN IN PARIS IN 1941, LEGENDRE IS A FORMER HISTORY PROFESSOR (AGREGE) WHO TAUGHT AT LILLE'S PRESTIGIOUS LYCEE FENELON FROM 1969 TO 1972. A POLITICAL ACTIVIST SINCE 1960 WHEN HE JOINED UNEF (RIGHT-OF-CENTER STUDENT MOVEMENT), HE FOUNDED THE THE GAULLIST STUDENT MOVEMENT IN 1962 AND SERVED AS ITS PRESIDENT FROM 1963 TO 1965. AT THE AGE OF 22, HE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE UDR CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN 1963.

2. AFTER RUNNING UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL IN LILLE IN 1965 AND 1971, HE WON A SEAT IN CAMBRAI (1973) WHICH THE SOCIALISTS HAD HELD SINCE 1936. AFTER ONE YEAR AS UDR NATIONAL SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (1973-74), LEGENDRE WAS
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NAMED UDR ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION IN JUNE 1974. IN DECEMBER 1974, HE CHALLENGED JACQUES CHIRAC FOR THE POST OF UDR SECRETARY GENERAL AND RECEIVED 27 VOTES AGAINST CHIRAC'S 57. LEGENDRE WAS ELECTED TO THE NORD PAS-DE-CALAIS REGIONAL COUNCIL IN 1976 AND THEN WON ANOTHER VICTORY IN THE MARCH 1977 CAMBRAI MUNICIPAL

ELECTIONS WHEN HE OUSTED THE INCUMBENT SOCIALIST
MAYOR.

3. LEGENDRE IS AN INTELLECTUAL ACTIVIST WHO
COMBINES AN OBVIOUS TASTE FOR ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE
POLITICS WITH A WRY APPRECIATION OF THE VAGARIES
OF POLITICAL LIFE. THUS, WHILE HE CONSIDERS HIM-
SELF A CONSERVATIVE WHOSE INTEREST IN THE RPR IS
BASED ON THE GAULLISTS' ANALYSIS OF FRENCH PROBLEMS,
HE HAS STRUCK OUT ON HIS OWN WHEN FACED WITH THE
UNRECONSTRUCTED OLD GUARD OF THE GAULLIST
ORGANIZATION IN THE NORD DEPARTMENT. INITIATIVE
AND COURAGE ARE HIS CODE WORDS; HE CHOSE TO RUN
IN CAMBRAI AGAINST AN INCUMBENT SOCIALIST WHEN THE
RPR WOULD NOT SACRIFICE ONE OF ITS OLDER MAYORS IN
A SAFER CITY. THE RESULT WAS THAT LEGENDRE'S
VICTORY WAS ONE OF ONLY 3 BRIGHT SPOTS FOR THE
MAJORITY IN LAST MONTH'S ELECTIONS. COMMENT:
LEGENDRE'S REPUTATION AS A TOUGH POLITICIAN IS,
IN LARGE MEASURE, A RESULT OF THE PECULIAR
POLITICS OF THE COMBRESI. FACED IN 1973 WITH A PS

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OPPONENT WHO WAS OLD, SICK AND NO LONGER IN CONTROL OF HIS LOCAL FEDERATION, LEGENDRE SCORED AN EASY VICTORY OVER A WEAK CANDIDATE. SINCE 1973 LEGENDRE HAS BECOME WHAT THE FRENCH CALL A "GOOD DISTRICT DEPUTY". HE HAS TAKEN EXCELLENT CARE OF HIS CONSTITUENTS, HAS BEEN HIGHLY VISIBLE IN THE DISTRICT AND HAS BUILT A SUPERB LOCAL REPUTATION. AS MAYOR OF CAMBRAI, LEGENDRE WILL BE SOMEWHAT A TRIBUTARY OF HIS DEPUTY MAYOR, WHO WILL HAVE TO PROTECT HIS FLANKS WHILE LEGENDRE IS IN PARIS.

4. ONE OF HIS PRIMARY POLITICAL INTERESTS IS EDUCATIONAL REFORM, A USEFUL BACKGROUND FOR HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES IN CONTINUING AND ADULT EDUCATION. HE ADVOCATES "OPEN" POLITICS, IS NOT MUCH IMPRESSED WITH CALLS FOR PARTY DISCIPLINE AND SEEMS MORE INDEPENDENT THAN THE AVERAGE RPR DEPUTY. HE IS A MAN OF WIDE INTERESTS AND, WHILE HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXPERIENCE MAY NOT SHOW MUCH TIME DEVOTED TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HE HAS RECENTLY EXPRESSED AT LENGTH HIS CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET INROADS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE CONGO. HE WILL GROW INTELLECTUALLY IN HIS CURRENT JOB - WHETHER THAT GROWTH WILL TRANSMUTE THE DISTRICT DEPUTY INTO A NATIONAL FIGURE REMAINS TO BE SEEN. LEGENDRE HAS TRAVELLED EXTENSIVELY IN EASTERN EUROPE, THE SOVIET UNION AND AFRICA AND WAS A LEADER GRANT VISITOR TO THE US IN AUGUST 1975. GAMMON

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